from State Government of Andhra Pradesh the funds have been released for the development of following rural tourism sites in the state:

(i) Rs. 50 lakhs for Pochampalli in 2003-04
(ii) Rs. 50 lakhs for Konaseema in 2003-04
(iii) Rs. 50 lakhs for Puttaparthi in 2004-05
(iv) Rs. 50 lakhs for Srikalahasti in 2004-05
(v) Rs. 50 lakhs for Chinchinada in 2004-05
(vi) Rs. 20 lakhs for Pochampalli in 2004-05
(vii) Rs. 20 lakhs for Srikalashasti in 2004-05

Development of infrastructure to boost tourism

4306. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD
SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that by the end of 2004, around 35 lakhs tourists have visited India and it is the highest ever in history;

(b) whether as per estimates of Government, we would have over 2 million visitors between November, 2004 and March 2005;

(c) whether it is also a fact that nothing significant has changed in the infrastructural development to accommodate the rise in tourists; and

(d) if so, what is the action plan of Government to address this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir. As per the estimated figures, about 33 70 lakh foreign tourists visited India during 2004 which is the highest figure recorded so far.

(b) As per the estimates, about 1.84 million foreign tourists visited India during November 2004 to March 2005.

(c) and (d) A number of steps have been taken by the Government for infrastructure development to accommodate the rise in tourists. States/ UTs have been requested to allot maximum number of plots in their States for construction of hotels. In order to encourge setting up of budget hotels, incentives in the form of capital subsidy are provided to specified category of hotels. In the recently concluded State Tourism Ministers' Conference it was *inter-alia* resolved that States would strive for development of world

class infrastructure; work towards streamlining their land policy to facilitate development of adequate hotel rooms; and would take up the issue of operation and maintenance of tourist infrastructure through Public-Private Partnership. In addition, Ministry of Railways has been requested to expedite the work on the proposal for establishing 100 budget hotels.

Constitution of National Tourism Advisory Council

4307. SHRI C. PERUMAL:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether a National Tourism Advisory Council has been constituted;

(b) if so, the composition thereof;

(c) whether the National Tourism Advisory Council has held its meeting;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the issues discussed and the decisions taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The National Tourism Advisory Council (NTAC) is chaired by the Union Minister of State of Tourism (Independent Charge) and has Members from Ministries of Government of India, Experts in the field of travel and tourism management and President of Travel/Trade Associations with Secretary (Tourism), Government of India as Member-Secretary.

(c) to (e) The first meeting of the NTAC was held on 30th March 2005 where issues concerning building infrasturcture with focused and coordinated efforts to cope with the large flow of tourist traffic, shortage of hotel accommodation, reduction/rationalization of taxes, improving railway infrastructure, involvement of local people/business houses in conservation of monuments, immigration problems, setting up of Convention Centres, setting up of a Tourist Promotion Board, etc. were raised by the Members. Suggestions were also received for setting up of Sub-Groups involving representatives of State Governments, whenever required to discuss the issues in greater detail and make concrete recommendations.